

Legal Career Summary

Retired lawyer with over 60 years of experience in personal injury law, accident compensation, workers compensation, criminal law, and judicial service. Internationally recognized expert in no-fault compensation schemes with extensive consulting experience across multiple jurisdictions.

Current age: 95 years (as of 2025) Still active in ACC advocacy and consultation

Professional Experience

Early Legal Career (1949-1961)

Court Clerk, New Zealand Justice Department (1949-1957)

- Magistrates Court, Wanganui (1949)
- Supreme Court, Dunedin (1953)
- Magistrates Court, Wellington (1954-1957)

Law Clerk, Frank O'Flynn (1957-1959)

- First law clerk for Frank O'Flynn
- Resigned from Justice Department to take position

Legal Practice, Wanganui (1960-1961)

- 1960: Qualified as lawyer and joined Sir Roy Jack's law firm
- 1960: Undertook wind down of law firm in Taihape on behalf of Wanganui District Law Society
- 1961: Offered partnership in another Wanganui law firm
- Organised combination of two firms into one partnership

Partnership, Jack, Willis, Riddet and Rennie (1961-1969)

Partner (1961-1969)

- Practiced criminal law, civil damages, Workers Compensation and commercial law
- Conducted litigation including personal injury, workers compensation and criminal cases
- Conducted jury trials

Coroner for Wanganui (1963-1969)

- Appointed 1963 while continuing litigation practice

Judicial Appointment (1969-1974)

Stipendiary Magistrate (1969-1974)

- 1969: Appointed to sit in New Plymouth as Stipendiary Magistrate for Taranaki area including District Court sittings in remote areas

Accident Compensation Commission Career

Consultant and Review Officer (1974)

Consultant to Accident Compensation Commission (August 1974)

- Invited to be consultant to design a review and appeal system for the Commission
- Worked directly with Commissioners
- Established research and planning section within Commission

- Appointed the first Review Officer undertaking reviews of ACC decisions all over New Zealand
- October 1974: Accompanied Commissioner Graham to Australia to learn about workers compensation review and appeal systems in different Australian States

Director of Research and Planning (1974-1985)

- November 1974: Asked to form a Review and Appeal section in the Commission
- Observed interplay between Commissioners and their implementation of new ACC legal system
- Observed consequences of abolition of the Commission by the Muldoon government in 1982 and establishment of the Corporation
- From 1979: Had frequent meetings with Sir Owen Woodhouse by telephone and in person on ACC issues
- Made submissions to several Select Committees in Parliament on ACC issues
- 1985: Resigned from ACC out of frustration with politicians including Ministers' lack of understanding of the Woodhouse principles and the complexities of personal injury law

International Consulting Career

International Compensation Consultants Limited (1985-1988)

Principal Consultant (1985-1988)

- Set up consultancy called International Compensation Consultants Limited
- Advised and lectured to many local and overseas organisations on NZ ACC law

Victoria State Government, Australia (1985-1986)

- Worked in Melbourne for 18 months heading a task force development team
- Created new workers compensation law reporting to the Head of Victorian Department of Management and Budget
- Created WorkCare system (later called WorkCover) for Victoria State

Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly Administration (January 1986)

- Advised on establishment of a workers compensation system for the Island as required by ILO

South Australian State Government (April 1987-June 1988)

- Worked in Adelaide for 15 months
- Produced new Workers Compensation system for South Australia Government (WorkCover)

International Labour Organization (ILO), Switzerland (August 1988)

- Visited ILO concerning failures of NZ to comply with international law agreement regarding injured workers paying part of medical costs related to work injuries

Continuing Practice

- Continued legal practice involving review and appeals against ACC decisions
- Undertook various meetings and conferences on ACC issues

ACC Committees

New Zealand Law Society ACC Committee

Founder and Long-serving Convenor (1990-2019)

- 1990: Persuaded the NZ Law Society to establish a Committee to specialise in ACC law, Court cases, operational problems and any proposed changes to the law
- 1996: Became convenor and remained in that position for 23 years until 2019
- Currently still a member of NZLS ACC Committee

ACC Futures Coalition

Active Member (2009-Present)

- ACC Futures Coalition is a group of health providers, lawyers, ACC consumers, academics and unions campaigning to maintain ACC and keep it publicly owned
- Coalition set up in 2009 after attacks on the scheme and signals from government to privatise various ACC accounts
- Recently met with deputation from Fiji government to discuss and give advice on problems concerning their workers compensation and ACC type schemes
- Active in advising and writing papers for the Coalition
- Uses political and other connections to assist in improving the ACC scheme as a public universal socio/legal system for dealing with personal injury by accident in NZ

International Speaking Engagements

Europe

University of Uppsala, Sweden (June 1986)

- Invited by two large Swedish Insurance companies to speak at Colloquium on Compensation for Personal Injury in Sweden and other Countries
- Presented paper on ACC on 16th June 1986
- Received many invitations to talk at law schools and conferences in England and Europe on the NZ ACC scheme
- Spoke to numerous workers compensation authorities in Denmark, United Kingdom, and Canada (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver)

Law School, Graz, Austria (June 1988)

- Gave ACC paper at Law School
- Met owners of AVUS insurance claims settlement experts for Europe based in Graz

AVUS Insurance Conference, Budapest, Hungary (1988)

- Gave ACC paper to large insurance conference organised by AVUS

AVUS Conference, Schladming, Austria (September 1991)

- Arrived 24th September and gave ACC paper which was well received

UK Law Commission, London (October 1991)

- 18th October 1991: Gave lecture on the NZ ACC scheme to audience of several law professors, lawyers, QCs, Lord Chancellor's Department Officials and others
- Followed by discussions about NZ law on personal injury
- Introduced to Mr. Jack Beaton from the UK Law Commission

AVUS Conference, Schladming, Austria (August 1995)

- Participated in Court in Leoben as expert witness on ACC law involving a NZ citizen injured in bus crash
- Gave evidence regarding the legal rights of New Zealand citizens suffering personal injury by accident while temporarily overseas

Commonwealth and International Conferences

9th Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association Conference, Sydney (1991)

- Attended conference en route to Austria

Commonwealth Law Conference, Cyprus (4th-7th May 1993)

- Gave paper on 7th May entitled "No fault Compensation Schemes -- Are they an Answer"

Greek/Australian International Legal and Medical Conference, Rhodes (May 1993)

- Delivered paper on the NZ "no fault system" which prohibited suing for damages for personal injury (including medical injury during treatment)
- 27th May: Delivered paper entitled "Negligence by the Health Professional in New Zealand 1992"
- Paper interested medicos and lawyers at the conference
- Interviewed by Australian ABC radio programme regarding NZ law prohibiting the right to sue for damages for personal injury caused by medical treatment

Publications

Books

Accident Compensation in New Zealand (1990)

- Published by Brookers

Personal Injury in New Zealand" (Contributing Author)

- Invited to write section on ACC law
- Published by Thompson Brookers (Butterworths)

Conference Papers

- "No fault Compensation Schemes -- Are they an Answer" (Commonwealth Law Conference, Cyprus, 7th May 1993)
- "Negligence by the Health Professional in New Zealand 1992" (Greek/Australian International Legal and Medical Conference, Rhodes, 27th May 1993)
- ACC papers presented at: Uppsala University Sweden (1986), Graz Austria (1988), Budapest Hungary (1988), Schladming Austria (1991, 1995)
- ACC paper presented to UK Law Commission (18th October 1991)

Other Professional Activities

Royal Federation of New Zealand Justices Association (1994-2004)**Legal Adviser and Trainer**

- Asked to act as legal adviser and take over training of Justices of the Peace to serve on the Court bench
- Set courses and marked papers of JPs undertaking the course
- Attended regional, annual and national meetings until 2004

Sprott House Trust Board (1999-2010s)**Board Member (1999-2002) Chairman (2002-2010s)**

- Joined charitable Trust Board established in 1898, operating as aged care facility in Wellington
- Involved in development of trust facilities including building a specialised 24 bed dementia unit and two multi-storied blocks for care aged with en-suite facilities
- On completion assets valued in excess of \$18M
- Involved in decisions relating to aged care industry especially the impact of commercial operators
- Trust eventually sold assets and invested proceeds

Lions International

Charter Member, Wanganui Lions Club (1961)

- Held various offices in the Club including President
- 1983/84: Elected District Governor of Lions District 202M
- 1984/85: Chairman of the Council of District Governors for New Zealand
- Attended international Lions conventions in Honolulu and San Francisco representing New Zealand Lions
- Life Member Karori Lions Club
- Life Member Lions Clubs Lloyd Morgan Charitable Trust
- Awarded Melvin Jones Fellow by Lions International

Education

- Wanganui Technical College (1943-48), School Prefect
- Qualifications: LLB (Victoria University of Wellington)

Additional Skills

- Private pilot's licence (obtained through client with pilot training school)
 - Used aviation for court circuit work in remote areas
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